

Department of State

Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA) Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO): FY2015 Capacity-Building Program for U.S. Undergraduate Study Abroad

Announcement Type: New Cooperative Agreement

Funding Opportunity Number: ECA-ECAAS-15-005

Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance Number: 19.009

Key Date/Application Deadline: Thursday, June 4, 2015

Executive Summary:

The Office of Global Educational Programs of the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, U.S. Department of State, is pleased to announce an open competition for proposals to advance the Bureau's objectives of mutual understanding between the people of the United States and those of other countries, specifically through greater U.S. student mobility, through the administration of the FY 2015 Capacity-Building Program for U.S. Undergraduate Study Abroad. This competition is a component of the Department's engagement on expanding and diversifying U.S. study abroad through its new U.S. study abroad unit.

Under this cooperative agreement, the selected recipient will provide administrative support services, monitoring, evaluation, and programmatic advising and support to sub-recipients for the execution of ECA's FY 2015 Capacity-Building Program for U.S. Undergraduate Study Abroad. In close consultation with ECA, the recipient will run a nationwide competition to provide awards averaging approximately \$50,000 to between 17 to 20 accredited U.S. higher education institutions (HEIs) to create or expand their U.S. study abroad programs under outlined diversity goals. None of the funding may be used for student scholarships. The recipient will monitor the fiscal and programmatic progress of sub-recipients and their projects with regular reporting of results to ECA.

The Capacity-Building Program for U.S. Undergraduate Study Abroad should be designed to create or expand the capacity of U.S. HEIs to administer study abroad programs under diversity goals, whether broadening the student population who studies abroad and/or the destinations in which they study. It is also intended to allow U.S. institutions to collaborate with and help expand the capacity of overseas HEIs to provide academic programs for U.S. undergraduate students.

For the purposes of this cooperative agreement, study abroad programming is broadly defined as programming that supports short- and/or long-term internationalization activities for undergraduate students at U.S. HEIs.

All applications for this cooperative agreement must be submitted by U.S. public or private non-profit organizations, meeting the provisions described in Internal Revenue code section 26 USC 501(c)(3). Total funding for this cooperative agreement is up to \$1,190,000.

Applicants may submit only one proposal under this competition. If multiple proposals are received from the same applicant, all submissions will be declared ineligible and receive no further consideration in the review process.

Pending successful implementation of this program and the availability of funds in subsequent fiscal years, it is ECA's intent to renew this grant or cooperative agreement for two additional consecutive fiscal years, before openly competing it again.

A. Program Description:

Overall grant making authority for this program is contained in the Mutual Educational and Cultural Exchange Act of 1961, Public Law 87-256, as amended, also known as the Fulbright-Hays Act. The purpose of the Act is "to enable the Government of the United States to increase mutual understanding between the people of the United States and the people of other countries...; to strengthen the ties which unite us with other nations by demonstrating the educational and cultural interests, developments, and achievements of the people of the United States and other nations...and thus to assist in the development of friendly, sympathetic and peaceful relations between the United States and the other countries of the world." The funding authority for the program above is provided through legislation.

Summary:

It is imperative that the next generation of leaders understand and can operate within the political and economic landscape of the 21st century. Through study abroad, U.S. students gain critical experiences and perspectives and begin to establish networks that enhance their individual prospects in today's globalized workforce and their future potential as global problem-solvers. Additionally, U.S. HEIs gain value for their campuses when they develop or expand and diversify study abroad as a key component of their overall internationalization efforts.

According to Open Doors—an annual international and U.S. student mobility report that is sponsored by the U.S. Department of State and administered by the Institute of International Education—less than ten percent of U.S. undergraduate students study abroad before they graduate, despite the many benefits of study abroad. Data on U.S. participants in study abroad programs, their destination countries and their fields of study also indicates an often narrowly-defined population of whom the majority go to a limited area of the world.

Through this NOFO, ECA seeks to engage a diverse array of study abroad practitioners, faculty and administrators at selected U.S. HEIs with the goal of expanding capacity for study abroad at a national level. Through the efforts of the recipient of this cooperative agreement, U.S. HEIs will receive initial funding to establish or expand study abroad within the institution in a strategic manner.

The newly developed or expanded programming created with these grants should ensure that U.S. HEIs are able to match institutional or academic U.S. study abroad goals with

study abroad opportunities; increase the overall number and diversity of student and faculty participation in study abroad; find and maintain strong international partnerships; broaden the fields of study of participating students and the countries where students are traveling; and ensure student safety and well-being, as well as academic integrity in study abroad programming.

Funding Goal:

This recipient of this cooperative agreement will provide administrative support services for ECA's FY 2015 Capacity-Building Program for U.S. Undergraduate Study Abroad, which seeks to create or expand the capacity of U.S. HEIs to administer study abroad programs under diversity goals, including broadening the student population who studies abroad and/or the destinations in which they study. It is also intended to allow U.S. institutions to collaborate with and help expand the capacity of overseas HEIs to provide academic programs for U.S. undergraduate students.

In both cases, the recipient of this cooperative agreement needs to encourage applications for capacity building sub-awards that, among one or more key variables, endeavor to expand access to students less commonly served by study abroad on the respective campus or campuses, including first-generation college/university students, students of diverse race or ethnic backgrounds, students with disabilities, and students in underrepresented disciplines. Applications should also be encouraged from a diverse range of U.S. HEIs, including Minority-Serving Institutions and community colleges. The sub-awards should also expand capacity to destination countries not already accessible to the target student body.

The recipient of the cooperative agreement will, in consultation with ECA, promote and administer a transparent and merit-based nationwide open competition that ensures outreach to a diverse array of accredited U.S. HEIs, especially institutions in the beginning stages of their study abroad programming. The recipient will be expected to convene independent panels of experts to review submitted proposals for final approval by ECA. The recipient will be expected to monitor the progress, including fiscal management, of awarded projects with regular reporting of results to ECA.

Proposals for this cooperative agreement should include a strategy for organizing and administering a nationwide competition to obtain and review applications from a diverse range of U.S. HEIs seeking to create or improve upon their study abroad programming; issue the sub-awards via an equitable and transparent process; and monitor, provide guidance and support, evaluate and regularly report on the performance of sub-recipients through the life of their funding.

The Bureau will work cooperatively and closely with the recipient of this cooperative agreement and will maintain a regular dialogue on administrative and program issues and questions as they arise over the duration of the award.

A proposal for this cooperative agreement may be submitted by an accredited U.S. college or university or by another U.S. public or private non-profit organization meeting the provisions described in Internal Revenue code section 26 USC 501(c)(3).

Interested organizations should read the NOFO for all information prior to preparing proposals. Please refer to the solicitation package including this NOFO and the Proposed Submission Instructions (PSI) for further instructions.

Program Design:

Applicant organizations are requested to submit a narrative outlining a comprehensive strategy for the administration and program implementation of ECA's FY 2015 Capacity-Building Program for U.S. Undergraduate Study Abroad, including preparation of participant recruitment guidelines, selection of sub-recipient institutions, and monitoring sub-recipient programs. Applicants for this cooperative agreement should outline a plan for recruitment of sub-recipients from a diverse set of U.S. HEIs.

The comprehensive program strategy should reflect a vision for the program as a whole, interpreting the goals of the FY 2015 Capacity-Building Program for U.S. Undergraduate Study Abroad with creativity and providing innovative ideas and recommendations for the program. The strategy should include a description of how the various components of the Program will be integrated to build upon and reinforce one another.

Applicants for this cooperative agreement should also be prepared to collaborate with the Bureau on its U.S. Study Abroad digital platform and should describe how they will provide periodic electronic data reports and other submissions for this platform, the Bureau's participant database, and other social media properties to help amplify best practices in the field of study abroad.

Proposals must address the applicant organization's plans under the cooperative agreement to serve both types of institutions who will receive sub-awards under this program including:

- a) U.S. institutions proposing to establish and/or significantly expand their study abroad offerings through wholly or substantially new programs, and
- b). U.S. institutions with relevant experience providing study abroad opportunities who seek to engage an underrepresented student population on their campuses for study abroad.

Both types of organizations must submit proposals that outline a strategy which includes one or more exchange visits by U.S. students and, as relevant, accompanying faculty/administrators, between the United States and a foreign country. Both types of organizations also must propose how they will partner with international counterparts on receiving U.S. students in order to expand the capacity of the foreign partner to host U.S.

students, particularly in locations in eligible foreign countries that have not participated extensively in traditional study abroad programs.

In both of these categories, sub-awards will support projects that result in increased and broadened opportunities for U.S. undergraduate students to study abroad in quality academic programs that form an integral part of degree-granting programs at accredited U.S. educational institutions at the tertiary level.

Applicants wishing to manage this cooperative agreement must provide their strategy to encourage sub-recipient applications that focus on non-traditional study abroad students, non-traditional study abroad destinations and/or non-traditional fields for study abroad.

The Bureau anticipates that the award recipient for the cooperative agreement will seek applications for and in the end award approximately 17-20 sub-awards to accredited U.S. colleges or universities for the first year at levels averaging approximately \$50,000 each, with total Bureau funding not to exceed \$1,190,000.

KEY ACTIVITIES:

Nationwide Competition: Under ECA's direction, the recipient should develop a transparent, merit-based open competition for U.S. HEIs. The competition should invite proposals that support U.S. study abroad capacity building.

The proposal should describe a process for soliciting, receiving, reviewing, and recommending proposals for additional review and approval by ECA. This process, including draft solicitation documents, should be presented for ECA approval at least three weeks prior to the opening date of the competition.

The recipient should also describe a screening/selection process to present to ECA for approval. The process should include clearly identified review criteria, which will form the basis of a merit-based selection of HEIs. This process should allow for institutions to be selected and notified as quickly as possible, preferably by early 2016.

The recipient should respond to both telephone and electronic queries from potential applicant organizations.

The recipient should conduct a technical review of all proposals received for minimum eligibility and completion of required documentation. Proposals should be shared with ECA upon request.

The recipient will arrange a review of proposals by panels, recruiting and selecting appropriate academic and professional experts based on rules provided by ECA regarding who may serve on a panel and conflict of interest rules. The panel will review proposals, observing Bureau and program diversity and other objectives. The recipient should provide ECA with information about the scheduling and composition of panels at least four weeks before the meetings are scheduled to convene. An ECA representative may

serve as an observer and resource at the panel meetings. Employees of the recipient may facilitate and observe proposal review panels, but may not serve as voting members.

The recipient will submit the slate of proposals recommended by the review panel to ECA for final selection, providing ECA with three, hard copies of each recommended and alternate proposal.

The recipient will prepare selection notification for selected and alternate proposals for ECA signature. The recipient will prepare non-selection notification for signature under its own organization. The text for all notifications must be approved by ECA. The recipient will send notification to all selected and alternate institutions, informing them of their status in a timely manner. The recipient will respond to queries from applicants about awards after selection.

Outreach and Publicity

The recipient will work in close cooperation with ECA to develop a broad strategy for U.S. publicity and outreach that includes a diverse range of U.S. HEIs and in particular to institutions in the beginning stages of their study abroad programming. The recipient should present ECA with this strategy for approval prior to implementation. All outreach should be conducted virtually. Funding should not be requested for outreach travel, visits to universities, or attendance at conferences.

The recipient should develop a media strategy to publicize the FY 2015 Capacity-Building Program for U.S. Undergraduate Study Abroad through local, national, and international media via written materials, electronic communication, social media, and other means. The material should highlight the role of the U.S. Government and the Department of State in the competition. The publicity strategy and all publication materials must be submitted to the Bureau for approval prior to publication and dissemination.

All print and online materials provided to applicant organizations (including notification letters about the results of the grants competition), the media, overseas partners, and selection panel members should be submitted for ECA approval prior to distribution.

Any communication involving revisions to program policy or guidelines should be cleared by ECA prior to dissemination.

Program Administration: The recipient is responsible for developing a detailed program plan and timeline to administer the program and stay on target by reporting milestones achieved on a timely basis to ECA. The recipient will ensure that the program stays on schedule, but immediately alert ECA to necessary changes in the program plan and/or timeline if unforeseen events or issues arise.

Support Services: The recipient should provide advising support to institutions provided with a capacity-building sub-award to assist them with the general design,

execution, and evaluation of their study abroad programs. Proposals that outline innovative methods to virtually connect selected institutions to each other, building a peer network of support and the sharing of best practices, are encouraged.

Program Evaluation: The recipient must provide an evaluation of the overall capacity-building program, including what institutions were funded, the successes and challenges of their programmatic activities, institutional changes in capacity and sustainability plans for the funded programs, as well as an overview of the students participating, their fields of study, study abroad destinations, and other relevant data. Please see section “D.3j. *Program Monitoring and Evaluation*” for additional information on program evaluation.

Program Dates: The opening solicitation of the Capacity-Building Program for U.S. Undergraduate Study Abroad should be in October 2015 with a target of conferring the sub-awards in January 2016. Selected HEIs should be provided with no less than twelve months from receipt of the award to implement their proposed programs (ideally from summer 2016 through summer 2017). The recipient will be expected to oversee the entire implementation phase, as well as administering follow-on reporting. The program evaluation—as noted above and in D.3.j—is due on March 31, 2018. A final program narrative and financial report is due 90 days after the close of the cooperative agreement.

Program reporting:

The recipient should develop a plan to monitor and assess the quality and effectiveness of awarded proposals to present to ECA for approval. This plan should also include information about fiscal management. The plan should outline how awarded institutions will report outcomes on a quarterly and annual basis. The recipient should present a plan for follow-on reporting that illustrates the impact of the sub-award in creating or developing study abroad programs on both the U.S. and international partner campuses, taking into account the impact on participating students and faculty (to the extent possible). Preference is for plans that include a standardized, online reporting mechanism to ensure consistency of reporting from and across sub-award institutions. ECA will have final approval over the reporting tool and related content.

The recipient will provide program reports containing information about significant activities and accomplishments of program activities, including the number of participating students, faculty and/or administrators, study abroad destinations, fields of study, and agreed upon relevant data to ECA on a semi-annual basis. The recipient will also provide ad-hoc program updates, as requested by ECA.

The recipient will provide fiscal management reports, on a quarterly basis, detailing program expenditures.

The recipient will audit internal functions, systems, and controls as necessary.

Detailed Statement of Work: In a cooperative agreement the U.S. Study Abroad Branch (ECA/A/S/Q) of the Office of Global Educational Programs is substantially

involved in program activities above and beyond routine monitoring. The following are the recipient and bureau responsibilities.

Recipient responsibilities for this particular project include:

1. Drafting the Request for Proposals (RFP) for capacity-building sub-awards available to accredited U.S. HEIs;
2. Ensuring the proper and timely posting of the solicitation;
3. Responding to technical submission questions received via email and telephone of potential applicants;
4. Tracking and filing submitted applications;
5. Coordinating the review process of applications, including organizing review panels, taking accurate notes of review panels, and compiling score sheets and other required documents;
6. Drafting internal memorandums for clearances and approvals;
7. Drafting and transmitting invitation, negotiation, rejections, and other letters to applicants;
8. Ensuring all required documents are received and uploaded properly into Department systems;
9. Ensuring that organizations are properly registered in required systems;
10. Creating and updating trackers, charts, tables, graphs, and other documents.
11. Awarding the sub-awards via an equitable and transparent process and ensuring funding is spent consistent with federal guidelines;
12. Providing advising support and monitoring the sub-award programs, as needed;
13. Regularly reporting to ECA regarding the performance of sub-recipients throughout the duration of their sub-awards;
14. Illustrating the impact of the sub-awards through follow-on reporting throughout the duration of the cooperative agreement;
15. Collaborating with the Bureau to help maintain a U.S. Study Abroad-specific website by providing periodic electronic data reports and other textual submissions for this website and other social media properties to help amplify best practices in the field of study abroad; and
16. Providing a final report and evaluation on the entire program to ECA.

Bureau responsibilities for this particular project include:

1. Approving the program timeline and key personnel;
2. Reviewing and approving all program materials including the Request for Proposals (RFP) and any other public materials;
3. Reviewing and approving marketing and outreach plans for the program;
4. Making final approval for the selection of the sub-recipients;
5. Approving follow-on reporting mechanisms and tools;
6. Approving decisions related to special circumstances or problems throughout the duration of the program;
7. Approving budget modifications;
8. Conducting periodic reviews of the performance of the program and requesting ad hoc reports as needed and

9. Conducting an annual performance evaluation/review. Satisfactory performance is a condition of continued administration of the program.

Proposal Contents: Applicants should submit a complete and thorough proposal describing the program in a convincing and comprehensive manner. Since there is no opportunity for applicants to meet with reviewing officials, the proposal should respond to the criteria set forth in the solicitation and other guidelines as clearly as possible.

Proposals should address succinctly, but completely, the elements described below and must follow all format requirements.

NOTE: Proposals submitted through Grants.gov may only be submitted in the following formats:

- Microsoft Word
- Microsoft Excel
- Adobe Portable Document Format (PDF)
- ASCII Text
- Joint Photographic Experts Group (JPEG images)

Proposals should include the following items under the section headings in the GrantSolutions Application Checklist:

Online Forms

- SF-424, "Application for Federal Assistance"
- SF-424A, Budget Information – Non-Construction Programs
- SF-424B, "Assurances - Non-construction- Programs"
- Include other attachments, if applicable, such as indirect agreements, form 990, SF-LLL, etc.

Program Narrative

Executive Summary (One page)

In one double-spaced page, provide the following information about the project:

1. Name of organization/participating institutions
2. Beginning and ending dates of the program
3. Proposed program
4. Nature of activity
5. Funding level requested from the Bureau, total program cost, total cost-sharing from applicant and other sources
6. Scope and Goals
 - a. Number and description of participants
 - b. Wider audience benefiting from program (overall impact)
 - c. Geographic diversity of program, both U.S. and overseas
 - d. Topics covered

e. Anticipated results (short and long-term)

Narrative

In twenty (20 double-spaced, single-sided pages, provide a detailed description of the project addressing the areas listed below.

1. Vision (statement of need, objectives, goals, benefits);
2. Participating organizations, their roles, and their capacity for the project;
3. Program activities (with separate sections within the narrative to address; overall program design, HEI outreach, public education regarding study abroad/student mobility, HEI grantee services, recipient grantee monitoring and reporting and overall program monitoring and evaluation);
4. Program evaluation plans;
5. Follow-on plans with capacity building grant recipients for program sustainability;
6. Project management plans; and
7. Detailed work plan/time frame to illustrate the implementation, evaluation and sustainability of the capacity building grants.

Additional Information to be Submitted (not included in the 20-page narrative).

- Detailed Budget.
- Professional bio sketches and resumes/CVs for key staff and resumes/CVs of all new staff should be included in the submission; No resume should exceed two pages.
- Calendar of activities/itinerary
- Letters of endorsement
- First Time Applicant Attachments, if applicable.

B. Federal Award Information:

Type of Award: Cooperative Agreement

ECA's level of involvement in this program is listed under A. Program Description.

Fiscal Year Funds: FY2015

Approximate Total Funding: \$1,190,000

Approximate Number of Awards: One

Approximate Average Award: \$1,190,000

Floor of Award Range: None.

Ceiling of Award Range: \$1,190,000

Anticipated Award Date: August 1, 2015

Anticipated Project Completion Date: March 31, 2018

Additional Information:

Pending successful implementation of this program and the availability of funds in subsequent fiscal years, it is ECA's intent to renew this cooperative agreement for two additional consecutive fiscal years before openly competing it again.

C.) Eligibility Information:

C.1. Eligible applicants: Applications may be submitted by U.S. public and private non-profit organizations meeting the provisions described in Internal Revenue Code section 26 USC 501(c)(3).

C.2. Cost Sharing or Matching Funds: There is no minimum or maximum percentage required for this competition. However, the Bureau encourages applicants to provide maximum levels of cost sharing and funding in support of its programs.

When cost sharing is offered, it is understood and agreed that the applicant must provide the amount of cost sharing as stipulated in its proposal and later included in an approved agreement. Cost sharing may be in the form of allowable direct or indirect costs. For accountability, you must maintain written records to support all costs which are claimed as your contribution, as well as costs to be paid by the Federal government. Such records are subject to audit. The basis for determining the value of cash and in-kind contributions must be in accordance with the Office of Management and Budget's Circular 2 CFR Parts 200 and 600, entitled the Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards. In the event you do not provide the minimum amount of cost sharing as stipulated in the approved budget, ECA's contribution will be reduced in like proportion.

C.3. Other Eligibility Requirements:

a.) Bureau grant guidelines require that organizations with less than four years experience in conducting international exchanges be limited to \$130,000 in Bureau funding. ECA anticipates making one award in the amount of \$1,190,000 to support program and administrative costs required to implement this exchange program. Therefore, organizations with less than four years experience in conducting international exchanges are ineligible to apply under this competition.

b.) Technical Eligibility: All proposals must comply with the following or they will result in your proposal being declared technically ineligible and given no further consideration in the review process.

- Eligible applicants must agree to full collaboration with ECA in the implementation of the program and include suggested approval procedures for major components of the program in their narrative and overall program timeline.
- Due to the various responsibilities involved in the design and implementation of this program, prospective primary recipients can include a sub-recipient—who are responsible for carrying out specific activities or components of this program—as part of their application. Applications involving sub-recipients must clearly delineate the roles and responsibilities of each sub-recipient. Letters of commitment from any sub-recipient must be included in the application.
- Proposals requesting funding for infrastructure development activities, sometimes referred to as “bricks and mortar” support are NOT eligible for consideration

under this competition, will be declared technically ineligible and will received no further consideration in the review process.

- If more than one proposal is received from the same applicant, all submissions will be declared technically ineligible and will receive no further consideration in the review process. Please note: Applicant organizations are defined by their legal name, and EIN number as stated on their completed SF-424 and additional supporting documentation outlined in the Proposal Submission Instructions (PSI) document.

D.) Application and Submission Information:

Note: Please read the complete announcement before sending inquiries or submitting proposals. Once the NOFO deadline has passed, Bureau staff may not discuss this competition with applicants until the proposal review process has been completed.

D.1 Contact Information to Request an Application Package:

Please contact the U.S. Study Abroad Branch located in the Office of Global Educational Programs, (ECA/A/S/Q), SA-5, 4th floor, U.S. Department of State, 2200 C Street, NW, Washington, D.C. 20037, Tel: 202-632-9265 and Fax: (202) 632-6489, email: studyabroad@state.gov to request a Solicitation Package.

The Solicitation Package contains the Proposal Submission Instruction (PSI) document which consists of required application forms, and standard guidelines for proposal preparation.

Please specify Heidi Manley and refer to the Funding Opportunity Number located at the top of this announcement on all other inquiries and correspondence.

D.2. To Download a Solicitation Package Via Internet:

The entire Solicitation Package may be downloaded from the Bureau's website at <http://eca.state.gov/organizational-funding> or from the Grants.gov website at <http://www.grants.gov>.

Please read all information before downloading.

D.2a. Content and Form of Submission: Applicants must follow all instructions in the Solicitation Package. The application should be submitted per the instructions under D.3p. “Application Deadline and Method of Submission” section below.

D.3a. You are required to have a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) number to apply for a grant or cooperative agreement from the U.S. Government. This number is a nine-digit identification number, which uniquely identifies business entities. Obtaining a UEI number is easy and there is no charge. To obtain a UEI number, access <http://www.dnb.com> or call 1-866-705-5711. Please ensure that your UEI (DUNS)

number is included in the appropriate box of the SF – 424 which is part of the formal application package.

D.3b. All proposals must contain an executive summary, proposal narrative and budget.

Please Refer to the Solicitation Package. It contains the mandatory Proposal Submission Instructions (PSI) document for additional formatting and technical requirements.

D.3c. All federal award applicants must be registered in the System for Award Management (SAM) database in order to submit a proposal in response to an open competition on Grants.gov.

All federal award recipients must maintain current registrations in the SAM database. Recipients must maintain accurate and up-to-date information in www.SAM.gov until all program and financial activity and reporting have been completed. Recipients must review and update the information at least annually after the initial registration and more frequently if required information changes or another award is granted. Failure to register in SAM will render applicants ineligible to receive funding.

D.3d. You must have nonprofit status with the IRS at the time of application. Please note: Effective January 7, 2009, all applicants for ECA federal assistance awards must include in their application the names of directors and/or senior executives (current officers, trustees, and key employees, regardless of amount of compensation). In fulfilling this requirement, applicants must submit information in one of the following ways:

- 1) Those who file Internal Revenue Service Form 990, "Return of Organization Exempt From Income Tax," must include a copy of relevant portions of this form.
- 2) Those who do not file IRS Form 990 must submit information above in the format of their choice.

D.3e. In addition to final program reporting requirements, award recipients will also be required to submit a one-page document, derived from their program reports, listing and describing their grant activities. For award recipients, the names of directors and/or senior executives (current officers, trustees, and key employees), as well as the one- page description of grant activities, will be transmitted by the State Department to OMB, along with other information required by the Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act (FFATA), and will be made available to the public by the Office of Management and Budget on its USASpending.gov website as part of ECA's FFATA reporting requirements.

D.3f. If your organization is a private nonprofit which has not received a grant or cooperative agreement from ECA in the past three years, or if your organization received nonprofit status from the IRS within the past four years, you must submit the necessary

documentation to verify nonprofit status as directed in the PSI document. Failure to do so will cause your proposal to be declared technically ineligible.

D.3g. All ECA awards recipient organizations must be registered with GrantSolutions by accessing www.GrantSolutions.gov. To register as a first time user of GrantSolutions, please scroll to the bottom of the home page and click “Getting Started-Request a User Account” at <http://home.grantsolutions.gov/home/home/customer-support/getting-started/>. Organizations that have previously used GrantSolutions do not need to register again. If the organization is not able to access the system, please contact GrantSolutions.gov Help Desk for help in gaining access.

Support for Grantee Organizations is available from 8 AM – 6 PM EST, Monday – Friday and can be reached at help@grantsolutions.gov or 1-866-577-0771.

Please take into consideration the following information when preparing your proposal narrative:

D.3h. FOR INFORMATIONAL PURPOSES ONLY:

ADHERENCE TO ALL REGULATIONS GOVERNING THE J VISA

The Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs places critically important emphases on the security and proper administration of the Exchange Visitor (J visa) Programs and adherence by award recipients and sponsors to all regulations governing the J visa. A copy of the complete regulations governing the administration of Exchange Visitor (J) programs is available at <http://j1visa.state.gov> or from:

Office of Designation, Private Sector Programs Division
U.S. Department of State
SA-44, Suite 668
301 4th Street, SW
Washington, DC 20547

Please refer to Solicitation Package for further information.

D.3i. Diversity, Freedom and Democracy Guidelines

Pursuant to the Bureau's authorizing legislation, programs must maintain a non-political character and should be balanced and representative of the diversity of political, social and cultural life in the United States and abroad. "Diversity" should be interpreted in the broadest sense and encompass differences including race, color, national origin, sex, age, religion, geographic location, socio-economic status, disability, sexual orientation or gender identity. Proposals should demonstrate how diversity will enhance the program's goals and objectives and the participants' exchange experience. Please refer to the review criteria under the 'Support of Diversity' section of this document as well as the

DIVERSITY, FREEDOM AND DEMOCRACY section in the “Proposal Submission Instructions” document for specific suggestions on incorporating diversity into the total proposal.

Public Law 104-319 provides that "in carrying out programs of educational and cultural exchange in countries whose people do not fully enjoy freedom and democracy," the Bureau "shall take appropriate steps to provide opportunities for participation in such programs to human rights and democracy leaders of such countries." Public Law 106 - 113 requires that the governments of the countries described above do not have inappropriate influence in the selection process. Proposals should reflect advancement of these goals in their program contents, to the full extent deemed feasible.

D.3j. Program Monitoring and Evaluation

Proposals must include a plan to monitor and evaluate the project’s success, both as the activities unfold and at the end of the program. The Bureau recommends that your proposal include a draft survey questionnaire or other technique plus a description of a methodology to use to link outcomes to original project objectives. The Bureau expects that the recipient organization will track participants or partners and be able to respond to key evaluation questions, including satisfaction with the program, learning as a result of the program, changes in behavior as a result of the program, and effects of the program on institutions (institutions in which participants work or partner institutions). The evaluation plan should include indicators that measure gains in mutual understanding as well as substantive knowledge.

Successful monitoring and evaluation depend heavily on setting clear goals and outcomes at the outset of a program. Your evaluation plan should include a description of your project’s objectives, your anticipated project outcomes, and how and when you intend to measure these outcomes (performance indicators). The more that outcomes are "smart" (specific, measurable, attainable, results-oriented, and placed in a reasonable time frame), the easier it will be to conduct the evaluation. You should also show how your project objectives link to the goals of the program described in this NOFO.

Your monitoring and evaluation plan should clearly distinguish between program outputs and outcomes. Outputs are products and services delivered, often stated as an amount. Output information is important to show the scope or size of project activities, but it cannot substitute for information about progress towards outcomes or the results achieved. Examples of outputs include the number of people trained or the number of seminars conducted. Outcomes, in contrast, represent specific results a project is intended to achieve and is usually measured as an extent of change. Findings on outputs and outcomes should both be reported, but the focus should be on outcomes.

We encourage you to assess the following four levels of outcomes, as they relate to the program goals set out in the NOFO (listed here in increasing order of importance):

1. **Participant satisfaction** with the program and exchange experience.
2. **Participant learning**, such as increased knowledge, aptitude, skills, and changed understanding and attitude. Learning includes both substantive (subject-specific) learning and mutual understanding.
3. **Participant behavior**, concrete actions to apply knowledge in work or community; greater participation and responsibility in civic organizations; interpretation and explanation of experiences and new knowledge gained; continued contacts between participants, community members, and others.
4. **Institutional changes**, such as increased collaboration and partnerships, policy reforms, new programming, and organizational improvements.

Please note: Consideration should be given to the appropriate timing of data collection for each level of outcome. For example, satisfaction is usually captured as a short-term outcome, whereas behavior and institutional changes are normally considered longer-term outcomes.

Overall, the quality of your monitoring and evaluation plan will be judged on how well it 1) specifies intended outcomes; 2) gives clear descriptions of how each outcome will be measured; 3) identifies when particular outcomes will be measured; and 4) provides a clear description of the data collection strategies for each outcome (i.e., surveys, interviews, or focus groups). (Please note that evaluation plans that deal only with the first level of outcomes [satisfaction] will be deemed less competitive under the present evaluation criteria.)

Recipient organizations will be required to provide reports analyzing their evaluation findings to the Bureau in their regular program reports. All data collected, including survey responses and contact information, must be maintained for a minimum of three years and provided to the Bureau upon request.

D.3k. Virtual Exchange Component: ECA welcomes innovative ideas on how organizations can leverage appropriate mobile and/or online technologies to maintain engagement among exchange participants, encourage project collaboration and widen participation in the overall project to a broader audience. ECA strongly encourages organizations submitting proposals in response to this solicitation to suggest one or more virtual exchange components to complement the in-person exchange. The virtual exchange component(s) could come before, during and/or after the physical exchange. The objective for the virtual exchange component(s), defined as technology-enabled, sustainable, people-to-people, cross-cultural exchanges, is to augment the impact of the in-person exchange described in this solicitation. ECA encourages organizations to propose virtual exchange ideas that take advantage of ECA's existing web and social networking platforms, including our International Exchange Alumni space. Virtual exchange components would be coordinated with and approved by the ECA program office and U.S. missions abroad on a project by project basis.

D.3l. **Communications Guidance for ECA Grant Recipients:** All ECA Grant Recipients must adhere to the requirements in [ECA's Communications Guidance](#) on the creation of program branding and attribution, websites, social media, and press.

D.3m. Please take the following information into consideration when preparing your budget:

D.3n. Applicants must submit SF-424A – “Budget Information – Non-Construction Programs” along with a comprehensive budget for the entire program. **Budget requests may not exceed \$1,190,000.** There must be a summary budget as well as breakdowns reflecting both administrative and program budgets. Applicants may provide separate sub-budgets for each program component, phase, location, or activity to provide clarification.

D.3o. Allowable costs for the program include the following:

1) **Travel.** International and domestic airfare; visas; transit costs; ground transportation costs, except where these project activities will be paid directly by ECA. Please note that all air travel must be in compliance with the Fly America Act. Funding should not be requested for outreach travel, visits to universities, or attendance at conferences.

2) **Per Diem.** For U.S.-based programming, organizations should use the published Federal per diem rates for individual U.S. cities. Domestic per diem rates may be accessed at:

http://www.gsa.gov/Portal/gsa/ep/contentView.do?contentId=17943&contentType=GSA_BASIC.

Administrative costs can include:

- Staff salaries and benefits (each staff member and his/her position must be listed separately). Please also note the percentage of his/her total time spent on this program. A full-time director is required.
- Staff travel/per diem;
- Communication costs (e.g. fax, telephone, postage, communication equipment, etc.);
- Office supplies;
- Printing and duplication costs;
- OMB Circular 2 CFR Parts 200 Subpart F Audits
- Other direct costs; and
- Indirect costs.

Please refer to the Solicitation Package for complete budget guidelines and formatting instructions.

D.3p. Application Deadline and Method of Submission:

Application Deadline Date: **Thursday, June 4, 2015**

Method of Submission: Applications may only be submitted electronically through Grants.gov (<http://www.grants.gov>). Complete solicitation packages are available at Grants.gov in the “Find” portion of the system.

PLEASE NOTE: ECA bears no responsibility for applicant timeliness of submission or data errors resulting from transmission or conversion processes for proposals submitted via Grants.gov.

Please follow the instructions available in the ‘Get Started’ portion of the site (<http://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/apply-for-grants.html>).

Several of the steps in the Grants.gov registration process could take several weeks. Therefore, applicants should check with appropriate staff within their organizations immediately after reviewing this NOFO to confirm or determine their registration status with Grants.gov.

Once registered, the amount of time it can take to upload an application will vary depending on a variety of factors including the size of the application and the speed of your internet connection. In addition, validation of an electronic submission via Grants.gov can take up to two business days.

Therefore, we strongly recommend that you not wait until the application deadline to begin the submission process through Grants.gov.

The Grants.gov website includes extensive information on all phases/aspects of the Grants.gov process, including an extensive section on frequently asked questions, located under the "For Applicants" section of the website. ECA strongly recommends that all potential applicants review thoroughly the Grants.gov website, well in advance of submitting a proposal through the Grants.gov system.

Direct all questions regarding Grants.gov registration and submission to:

Grants.gov Customer Support

Contact Center Phone: 800 -518-4726

Business Hours: 24 hours a day, 7 days a week; closed on federal holidays

Email: support@grants.gov

Applicants have until midnight (12:00 a.m.), Washington, DC time of the closing date to ensure that their entire application has been uploaded to the Grants.gov site. There are no exceptions to the above deadline. Applications uploaded to the site after midnight of the application deadline date will be automatically rejected by the Grants.gov system, and will be technically ineligible.

Please refer to the Grants.gov website, for definitions of various "application statuses" and the difference between a submission receipt and a submission validation. Applicants will receive a validation e-mail from Grants.gov upon the successful submission of an application. Again, validation of an electronic submission via Grants.gov can take up to two business days. Therefore, we strongly recommend that you not wait until the application deadline to begin the submission process through Grants.gov. ECA will not notify you upon receipt of electronic applications.

It is the responsibility of all applicants submitting proposals via the Grants.gov web portal to ensure that proposals have been received by Grants.gov in their entirety, and ECA bears no responsibility for data errors resulting from transmission or conversion processes.

D.3q. Limitations on Number of Applications

Eligible applicants may not submit more than one proposal in this competition.

If more than one proposal is received from the same applicant, all submissions will be declared technically ineligible and will receive no further consideration in the review process. Please note: Applicant organizations are defined by their legal name, and EIN number as stated on their completed SF-424 and additional supporting documentation outlined in the Proposal Submission Instructions (PSI) document.

D.3r. Intergovernmental Review of Applications: Executive Order 12372 does not apply to this program.

E. Application Review Information

The Bureau will review all proposals for technical eligibility. Proposals will be deemed ineligible if they do not fully adhere to the guidelines stated herein and in the Solicitation Package. All eligible proposals will be reviewed by the program office, as well as the Public Diplomacy section overseas and State Department regional bureaus, where appropriate. Eligible proposals will be subject to compliance with Federal and Bureau regulations and guidelines and forwarded to Bureau grant panels for advisory review. Proposals may also be reviewed by the Office of the Legal Adviser or by other Department elements. All awards will be assessed for risk prior to their issuance. Final funding decisions are at the discretion of the Department of State's Assistant Secretary for Educational and Cultural Affairs. Final technical authority for assistance awards resides with the Bureau's Grants Officer.

E.1. REVIEW CRITERIA

Technically eligible applications will be competitively reviewed according to the criteria stated below. These criteria are not rank ordered and all carry equal weight in the proposal evaluation:

- 1. Quality of the program idea:** Proposals should exhibit originality, substance, precision, and relevance to the Bureau's mission.
- 2. Program planning:** Detailed agenda and relevant work plan should demonstrate substantive undertakings and logistical capacity. Agenda and plan should adhere to the program overview and guidelines described above.
- 3. Ability to achieve program objectives:** Objectives should be reasonable, feasible, and flexible. Proposals should clearly demonstrate how the institution will meet the program's objectives and plan.
- 4. Multiplier effect/impact:** Proposed programs should strengthen long-term mutual understanding, including maximum sharing of information and establishment of long-term institutional and individual linkages.
- 5. Support of Diversity:** Proposals should show substantive support of the Bureau's policy on diversity. Proposals should demonstrate how diversity will be achieved in the different aspects of program administration and of program design, content and implementation, including individual grantee/participant recruitment and selection. It is important that proposals have a clearly articulated diversity plan and not simply express general support for the concept of diversity.
- 6. Institutional Capacity:** Proposed personnel and institutional resources should be adequate and appropriate to achieve the program goals
- 7. Institution's Record/Ability:** Proposals should demonstrate an institutional record of successful exchange programs, including responsible fiscal management and full compliance with all reporting requirements for past Bureau awards (grants or cooperative agreements) as determined by Bureau Grants Staff. The Bureau will consider the past performance of prior recipients and the demonstrated potential of new applicants.
- 8. Follow-on Activities:** Proposals should provide a plan for continued follow-on activity (without Bureau support) which insures that Bureau supported programs are not isolated events.
- 9. Program Evaluation:** The proposal should include a plan to evaluate the program's success, both as the activities unfold and at the end of the program. The proposal should include a draft survey questionnaire or other technique plus description of a methodology to use to link outcomes to original project objectives.
- 10. Cost-effectiveness:** The applicant should demonstrate efficient use of Bureau funds. The overhead and administrative components of the proposal, including salaries and honoraria, should be kept as low as possible. All other items should be necessary and appropriate.
- 11. Cost-sharing:** Proposals should maximize cost-sharing through other private sector support as well as institutional direct and in-kind funding contributions.

F.) Federal Award Administration Information

F.1. Award Notices:

Final awards cannot be made until funds have been appropriated by Congress, allocated and committed through internal Bureau procedures. Successful applicants will receive an Federal Assistance Award (FAA) from the Bureau's Grants Office. The FAA and the

original proposal with subsequent modifications (if applicable) shall be the only binding authorizing document between the recipient and the U.S. Government. The FAA will be signed by an authorized Grants Officer, and transmitted to the recipient's responsible officer identified in the application.

Unsuccessful applicants of this NOFO will receive notification of the results of the application review from the ECA program office coordinating this competition.

F.2 Administrative and National Policy Requirements:

Terms and Conditions for the Administration of ECA agreements include the following: Office of Management and Budget's Circular 2 CFR Parts 200 and 600, entitled the Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards (Effective December 26, 2014, replacing the previous circulars).

For a copy of the OMB circular cited, please contact the U.S. Government Publishing Office or download from the www.ecfr.gov website.

Please reference the following websites for additional information:

<http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/grants>.

<https://www.statebuy.state.gov/fa/pages/home.aspx>

F.3. Reporting Requirements: You must provide ECA with an electronic copy of the following required reports:

Mandatory:

- 1.) Additional performance reports shall not be required more frequently than quarterly or, less frequently than annually. Annual reports shall be due 90 calendar days after the grant year; quarterly or semi-annual reports shall be due 30 days after the reporting period. (Frequency of these reports will be determined by the Grants Officer and Program Officer). The first page of the Performance Progress Report form (SF-PPR) must be submitted with all programmatic reports and can be found here: http://aopefa.a.state.gov/content.asp?content_id=20&menu_id=68. The complete report and supporting documentation must be uploaded by the Recipient as a *Grant Note* under the corresponding record for this Agreement in GrantSolutions.gov. For assistance, please contact the GrantSolutions Help Desk at 1 (866) 577-0771 (toll free for US callers) or by email at help@grantsolutions.gov. The Federal Financial Report (FFR SF-425/SF-425a) must be submitted through the Payment Management System (PMS). The electronic version of the FFR can be accessed at: <http://www.dpm.psc.gov/>. Once a financial report has been approved by the Department, the Recipient must upload the approved report to [GrantSolutions.gov](http://Grantsolutions.gov), in the same manner specified for the programmatic reports. Failure to comply with these reporting requirements may jeopardize the Recipient's eligibility for future Agreements.

- 2.) A SF-PPR, "Performance Progress Report" Cover Sheet must be submitted with all program performance reports.
- 3.) A final program and financial report no more than 90 days after the expiration or termination of the award;
- 4.) A concise, one-page final program report summarizing program outcomes no more than 90 days after the expiration of the award. This report should be e-mailed to: FFATAECA@state.gov. This one-page report will be transmitted to OMB, and be made available to the public via OMB's USAspending.gov website - as part of ECA's Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act (FFATA) reporting requirements.

Award recipients will be required to provide reports analyzing their evaluation findings to the Bureau in their regular program reports. Please refer to D. Application and Submission Instructions above for Program Monitoring and Evaluation information.

All data collected, including survey responses and contact information, must be maintained for a minimum of three years and provided to the Bureau upon request.

F.4. Additional Program Data Requirements:

Award recipients will be required to maintain specific data on program participants and activities in an electronically accessible database format that can be shared with the Bureau as required. At a minimum, the data must include the following:

- 1) Name, address, contact information and biographic sketch of all persons who travel internationally on funds provided by the agreement or who benefit from the award funding but do not travel.
- 2) Itineraries of international and domestic travel, providing dates of travel and cities in which any exchange experiences take place. Final schedules for in-country and U.S. activities must be received by the ECA Program Officer at least three work days prior to the official opening of the activity.

G. Agency Contacts

For questions about this announcement, contact: Heidi Manley, Deputy Director, U.S. Department of State, U.S. Study Abroad Branch of the Office of Global Educational Programs, (ECA/A/S/Q), SA-5, 4th floor, U.S. Department of State, 2200 C. Street, NW, Washington, D.C. 20037, TEL: 202-632-9265 and FAX: (202) 632-6489, studyabroad@state.gov.

All correspondence with the Bureau concerning this NOFO should reference the title and funding opportunity number listed at the top of this solicitation.

Please read the complete announcement before sending inquiries or submitting proposals. Once the NOFO deadline has passed, Bureau staff may not discuss this competition with applicants until the proposal review process has been completed.

H. Other Information:**Notice:**

The terms and conditions published in this NOFO are binding and may not be modified by any Bureau representative. Explanatory information provided by the Bureau that contradicts published language will not be binding. Issuance of the NOFO does not constitute an award commitment on the part of the Government. The Bureau reserves the right to reduce, revise, or increase proposal budgets in accordance with the needs of the program and the availability of funds. Awards made will be subject to periodic reporting and evaluation requirements per section F3. Reporting Requirements above.

Evan Ryan
Assistant Secretary for Educational and Cultural Affairs
U.S. Department of State

March 26, 2015

